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# Management response to the evaluation of UNDP contribution to development and corporate results at the regional level

## UNDP at the regional level

1. UNDP is a global knowledge-based organization which helps countries and regions achieve transformational changes based on their own development priorities. In an increasingly interconnected world, in which development challenges are no longer confined within geographical borders, UNDP, as part of the United Nations system, has recognized for some time that achieving sustainable results requires making a range of policy choices available to its counterparts at the country and regional levels. Regional development cooperation is, therefore, more than a relevant dimension of UNDP's mandate; it is a critical mechanism for increasing development effectiveness. A regional presence supports three critical UNDP objectives: (i) making country offices more effective development partners at the country level; (ii) making better use of internal knowledge (through the internal communities of practice) in order to achieve development results that are grounded in good practice; and (iii) being an active partner in external knowledge exchange as a contributor, beneficiary and broker vis-à-vis our programme country partners.

2. UNDP cooperation at the regional level reflects expectations of the organization expressed in the Strategic Plan for 2008-2013. The organization's regional presence allows it to respond to the demand for UNDP-specific support at both regional and country levels. UNDP is therefore pleased that the "Evaluation of UNDP's Contribution to Development and Corporate Results at the Regional Level" has confirmed that many of its regional operations have delivered significant development gains, and that organizational responses have been timely, cost effective, catalytic and well received. The evaluation has also, importantly, highlighted areas in which there could be improvement. Many of these are related to the challenges of keeping pace of the accelerating changes within and between regions. Some of these changes have already been, or are being, addressed.

3. In addition to its role as a distinct development partner, UNDP is committed to promoting system-wide coherence for the range of United Nations activities by playing a lead role within the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) at the regional level.

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This responsibility extends to efforts intended to add value via active participation in the Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM) convened by the United Nations Regional Commissions. Tackling complex development problems at the country and regional levels increasingly requires drawing from the combined strengths of the United Nations system and learning from regional interventions and models. As such, UNDP views its leadership of the regional directors' teams as an important mechanism for achieving coherent development results with the support of a coherent effort from the United Nations system.

4. Fully cognizant of the increasing importance of effective cooperation and coordination at the regional level, UNDP will continue to make efforts to engage with development partners and stakeholders in this regard. The present evaluation, in conjunction with this and related management responses, is a valuable input that will directly inform these ongoing efforts.

## Achievements

5. UNDP's Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 provides for regional programming to connect country-level and global initiatives and to facilitate cooperation between countries that share similar geographic, social and economic conditions. UNDP's regional programmes are designed to respond to regional, subregional and country contexts and priorities. Programmes are tailored to specific regional contexts and priorities while remaining grounded in the corporate priorities of poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy, and crisis prevention and recovery. Capacity development, gender equality, HIV and AIDS, information and communications technology, and South-South cooperation feature as cross-cutting priorities.

6. The evaluation reflects on the success of this approach for strengthening development results, and UNDP is encouraged that the report pointed out the various ways in which UNDP's work at the regional level helps countries make progress on their priorities. For instance, the evaluation finds that UNDP regional cooperation has been instrumental in promoting dialogue and cooperation that has allowed several countries to find common solutions quickly and at a lower overall cost. This was achieved by distilling knowledge and lessons learned from various countries into relevant, regionally contextualized models, and by helping national counterparts address critical cross-border issues for which they lacked the capacity or resources to address on their own. (The regional cooperation framework approved in 2010 took particular steps to ensure such complementarities.) Of the several successes that can be cited here, one example is UNDP's partnership with the European Union (EU). This partnership is especially important to the Central and Eastern European countries that have acceded to or are seeking to join the EU. A cross-border initiative in the same region has helped new EU member States share with EU accession countries lessons learned and knowledge and expertise on the transition and on development.

7. UNDP's work at the regional level has distinct attributes that can be of strategic value to partners at both the country and regional levels. UNDP can, for instance, support sensitive strategic priorities by creating a safe space for discussing issues as part of regional groups, issues that may be difficult for individual countries to take up by themselves. A good example of this comes from the Asia-Pacific region where a regional project helped countries deal with indigenous peoples' concerns regarding land rights. This project helped governments take up the issue in the context of natural resources management. Similarly, a regional human development report on corruption facilitated a frank analysis of the human development impact of corruption, opening up space for an increased level of

programmatic work on the subject at the country level. In the Arab States region, a UNDP-supported regional project won a South-South cooperation award for bringing together religious leaders from across the region for timely inter-faith dialogue.

8. The use of analytical work combined with efforts to help people and institutions network has been a defining feature of UNDP's work at the regional level over the last decade. For example, 39 regional and subregional human development reports have helped to champion the paradigm of people-centered development which UNDP has now promoted for 20 years. The reports have encouraged the development of regional and subregional communities of practice and knowledge management platforms in every region, and these communities and platforms can and should continue to evolve to positively influence regional development dialogue. A Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform was established in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Centre focuses on democratic governance and on modernizing government processes in the region. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, a community of practice network focused on the issue of gender was established by civil society organizations and technical experts. The network was an outgrowth of governmental gender-equality certification programmes in six countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay). The objective is to transfer the experiences from these countries to requesting peers (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama). For the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit, UNDP co-authored the "Development Challenges for the Arab Region" report, which focused on food sovereignty and poverty. The report was endorsed by Arab heads of State and government, and is now leading to the establishment of a League of Arab States database focused on the Millennium Development Goals. From this database an annual report, "MDGs-at-a-Glance", will be produced. An Asia-Pacific regional network that promotes the development of indigenous women's capacities to engage in public decision-making has been amply cited as a global best practice. In the last 12 months the regional service centres have provided essential support to help countries conceive ways to accelerate and sustain progress related to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This initiative is based on a framework supported by UNDG.

9. UNDP agrees with the evaluation that the organization can play different but related roles at the global, regional and country levels, and that synergies between all three levels can be strengthened on an ongoing basis. A gradual process of regionalization of functions, services and implementation capacities has taken place over the last decade, as UNDP has sought to enhance the support it provides both country and regional levels. UNDP integrated previously scattered human and financial resources from multiple sources into regional service centres with the aim of building partnerships, contextualizing knowledge, increasing efficiency and achieving economies of scale in all regions. Importantly, the evaluation affirms on page 33 that in a situation in which "all country offices cannot be strengthened, provision of technical support services from regional service centres has proved to be a relevant and appropriate option."

10. This evolution has picked up speed since the introduction of the 2008 regionalization strategy and has been instrumental in producing the achievements highlighted in the evaluation. The strategy drew from evidence from the 2007 survey of Headquarters products and services indicating that the "quality of services" from decentralized regional units was perceived twice as favorably as services from Headquarters locations. This task of integration and adjustment at the regional level is not yet complete, as observed by the evaluation. The concentration of assets at the regional level is well appreciated by managers and staff members within the organization. The organization further recognizes while within the organization there has been a high level of appreciation of regionalization, success depends on this positive feedback being echoed and reinforced by stakeholders in the regions.

11. UNDP is committed to constantly improving both development and cost effectiveness at all levels. The organization is pleased the evaluation found that the evolutionary approach to regional cooperation and coordination that has been taken during the last decade, and especially since 2008, has made the organization more effective in carrying out its cooperation and coordination roles. UNDP is actively seeking ways to reinforce and increase efficiency and effectiveness gains, and will in the upcoming months complete and implement a structural review that will improve incentives and mechanisms, as well as streamlining processes, to encourage greater focus on transformational development results at the country and regional levels. The current evaluation provides valuable inputs which will be internalized during this review.

## Challenges

12. Over the last decade the pace and complexity of change in development cooperation has posed formidable challenges to many if not all actors involved in international development. The UNDP strategy for addressing this challenge, recognized as successful by the evaluation, was twofold. The first activity was designing responses to national development priorities that provided contextualized views of needs, priorities and solutions, and reduced engagement costs at all stages, transactional and otherwise, in order to ensure higher ownership and participation. Secondly, UNDP's regionalization strategy provided a cost-benefit balance, increasing UNDP's ability to satisfy demand and contribute to development results at all levels.

13. Addressing the issues raised by the evaluation can build on practices already being developed or in place. As recommended by the evaluation, UNDP acknowledges the need for consistent application of corporate regionality criteria to guide regional programming decisions, and UNDP will draw on the experience of the regional programmes in Asia and the Pacific to devise a corporate approach.

14. UNDP considers that deepening and broadening its partnership base is a fundamental objective of all its programmes, including its regional programmes. UNDP fully agrees with this evaluation recommendation. In fact, UNDP is of the view that it can use the achievements of the regional programmes to attract new partners and diversify the mix of resources for development sourced from within and beyond regions. The evaluation observes that close geographical proximity and frequent interaction of experts from UNDP thematic areas and from other United Nations entities, including regional commissions, can enable UNDP to tap the knowledge base and technical resources available across thematic areas at the regional and subregional levels. UNDP takes note of these observations and will act to ensure that such approaches inform regional projects, country office support and engagements. This will be carried out by means of the regional directors' teams and other regional coordination mechanisms.

15. The evaluation finds that while UNDP's regional response was and remains appropriate, the capacity to deal with demand lags behind, either because of a lack of adequate staffing (see page 34 of the evaluation) or because the centres themselves are at different stages of development (page 40). UNDP's success in promoting regional public goods and supporting collaboration on cross-border and shared issues is also highlighted. In keeping with the ambitions of the organization to provide regions and countries with relevant knowledge and options, the evaluation finds strong reason to support UNDP in this domain, stating on page 34: "The establishment of regional service centres has contributed to an improvement in cross-practice collaboration although there are institutional constraints that limit cooperation across practice areas".

16. One challenge is measuring the impact of key regional and subregional knowledge products and advocacy efforts, as observed by recent evaluations of the regional cooperation frameworks. UNDP recognizes that systems are currently inadequate to track

and objectively report results and impact to stakeholders in this context, and will continue to strengthen results monitoring and evaluation systems.

17. With regard to the observation that "current arrangements for regional programming are not conducive to responding to cross-regional cooperation," UNDP notes that cross-regional cooperation falls within the mandate of the global programme, which is fully aligned with regional programmes through the UNDP practice architecture. (The work of the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth is an example of the cross-regional profile of UNDP, here facilitated by the global cooperation framework). Nevertheless, UNDP recognizes that more can be done to strengthen cross-regional cooperation, particularly in the areas of knowledge management and South-South cooperation.

18. UNDP disagrees with the recommendation that regional programmes and projects must be managed from a location in the region or subregion. UNDP is of the view that the selection of the appropriate location from which to deliver specific programmatic interventions must not be made *a priori*, but rather on the basis of relevant criteria, including potential for adding value, appropriateness as an entry point for discussions, and location of key counterparts, implementing partners as well as beneficiaries.

19. The evaluation recognizes the regional presence of UNDP as an important and necessary part of the organization's response to development challenges and opportunities at this level of international cooperation. Already the regional service centres, which as earlier noted have existed under the current regionalization strategy only since 2008, have demonstrated their capacity to attract and involve a broader and deeper regional and subregional constituency for UNDP initiatives. This has been evidenced by increasing participation of government and civil society representatives in various UNDP events, publications and other efforts.

20. The evaluation observes on page 40 that efficiency has been affected by a lack of funding, cost recovery and coordination and by poor implementation. It may be added that the suitability of the programming modalities for regional-level interventions may need revisiting. On the specific matter of knowledge management, the evaluation observes on page 36, "Knowledge management has improved as a result of UNDP's regional work and presence, but it does not take full advantage of interregional and corporate knowledge sharing potential." These findings on institutional results offer an affirmation of the relevance of UNDP's efforts at the regional level. They go beyond this to present a case for careful investment in requisite capacity and for streamlining of corporate resources, guidance and tools so that UNDP regional operations can fully realize their potential.

21. The evaluation makes important observations regarding corporate results involving UNDP's contributions to system-wide coherence. For instance, from page 37: "Collaboration among members of the United Nations system mainly takes place at the regional project level, but not sufficiently at the UNDAF [United Nations Development Assistance Framework] level." Even before the finalization of the evaluation, UNDP had invested seriously in improving the quality of its contributions to the UNDAF through improved guidance, support and oversight to UNDP offices in roll-out countries. This effort has continued throughout 2010, with lead support from the regional bureaux and regional service centres. Investments in this area will continue given the importance UNDP attaches to the substantive and operational coherence of United Nations system efforts at the country level, including through the regional director team mechanism. UNDP will continue to consider with other United Nations system agencies the effectiveness and efficiency gains to be derived from co-location.

22. Added to these challenges is the need to achieve a balance between regional-level support and country-level support. Going forward, this will be an important aspect of the discussion of development results. A holistic discussion of the resources required will be central to establishing and maintaining an optimal mix between these two priorities.

## Actions: taken and ongoing

23. The current evaluation echoes issues raised in evaluations of earlier regional cooperation frameworks, on the basis of which UNDP has already acted. For instance, the evaluation of the 2002-2006 regional cooperation framework for Latin America and the Caribbean recommended that UNDP focus more on supporting subregional human development reports and on strengthening collaboration with subregional institutions; these two activities were emphasized in the 2008-2012 framework. Regional cooperation framework formulations have also applied findings from thematic evaluations as well as from the evaluations of the global cooperation framework.

24. Since most if not all regional projects formulated under regional cooperation frameworks are directly implemented by UNDP, the organization's internal appraisal and approval process has since 2009 obliged all projects to make explicit mention of how lessons learned from relevant evaluations have informed the selection of priorities, the implementation strategy, the management arrangements and the intended results of the project. The appraisal machinery for all programmes (country, regional and global) is also under review with the aim of updating quality considerations in response to evolving organizational priorities. The criteria for assessing cases of direct implementation are being reviewed in order to improve cross-regional learning as well as congruence between regional priorities and national demand. These steps are fully consistent with related recommendations of the current evaluation.

## The way forward

25. UNDP is fully committed to strengthening its capacity to contribute at the regional level, including its own human resource capacity, in line with the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, as well as to address regional and country demand and to advance United Nations system-wide coherence.

26. In addition to the actions already taken, UNDP acknowledges the need for more centrally defined management systems and tools to guide engagement at the regional level, to promote the use of standardized procedures and increase the comparability of data across regions, and to avoid duplicating costly investments while optimizing the combined resources available at central and regional levels. The structural review mentioned above, along with related management actions, are intended to address many of these issues, and UNDP looks forward to pursuing these discussions with the Executive Board in forthcoming sessions.

27. As outlined in the third item of the Annex, efforts to bring policy advice closer to country and country office clients will continue, with emphasis on building policy advisory capacity and knowledge management systems for interregional lesson learning and programmatic collaboration. Deployment of a cadre of "practice leaders" to regional centres has already resulted in the closer alignment of regional support services with individual country priorities and better service delivery. Knowledge-management experts were placed in all the regional centres, and are playing essential roles: connecting internal and external knowledge to enrich what is known within UNDP, sharing that knowledge throughout the United Nations system and with outside knowledge networks; and helping country offices broker South-South knowledge exchange.

28. The cycles of the regional programmes, which previously were not harmonized with each other or with the corporate planning cycle (the multi-year funding framework 2000-2003, the multi-year funding framework 2004-2007 and the Strategic Plan 2008-2013), have now been extended or adjusted to align with the current Strategic Plan period. This

will facilitate the full alignment of UNDP's regional approaches with the forthcoming integrated budget, thus enabling a holistic discussion of UNDP's work at the regional level and the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation. This change should also lead to additional resources. (The regional cooperation frameworks currently receive 9 per cent of the total regular resources).

29. Given the specific challenges and opportunities that work at the regional level presents, UNDP has welcomed this evaluation and appreciates the lessons it provides for continuous organizational improvements. The annex on the following pages outlines the evaluation's main recommendations and the UNDP responses. These include specific steps the organization is taking to address the issues raised, including those that will require ongoing engagement with the Executive Board.

# Annex
# Key recommendations and management response

**Evaluation recommendation 1. UNDP should establish "regionality" criteria for regional programming in consultation with governments, building on existing good practices, to determine when a regional approach is appropriate.**

Regionality criteria would flow from an assessment of what works and what does not when using a regional or subregional approach; the identification of when such an approach adds value; and an analysis of why and how countries cooperate. Discussion concerning the development of these criteria should be broad and involve partner governments in programme and donor countries. A clear understanding of when the regional approach should or should not be used could be key to UNDP positioning in resource-constrained situations.

**Management response:** UNDP agrees with this recommendation and recognizes the need to establish clear corporate criteria for when to use regional programming as the appropriate modality to address development issues. As stated in the evaluation report, some regional bureaux, such as the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, have already introduced such criteria. Criteria are also applied in other regions based on the value-added of regional programming. This is validated through consultation with UNDP key partners in the region, including governments, regional and subregional organizations, other United Nations agencies and civil society actors during the formulation of regional programmes.

In reflecting on the evaluation findings and conclusions, UNDP has already identified three key elements that would justify a regional approach. These are: (a) managing externalities; (b) dealing with economies of scale; (c) promoting regional public goods that cannot be addressed at the national level. In addition, the regional programme should add value to country programmes. UNDP will reflect on past and current approaches to distinguish between regional and UNDAF/country programming. This will include reflecting on approaches used by other United Nations agencies to establish these criteria. This will be done in consultation with country offices and with government partners in programme and donor countries. The agreed criteria will be applied to the formulation of the new regional programme documents.

UNDP will also seek to further clarify the overall concept of the regional programmes, including their role, scope and function, and will review the current programme guidelines as they apply to regional programmes, including the programme modalities, consultation process, regionality criteria, management arrangements and review processes.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 1.1. Establish a set of corporate regionality criteria to determine what constitutes a regional approach as compared to a nationally based approach | July 2011 | Management Group | | |
| 1.2. Review the programme/project appraisal process and update programming guidelines incorporating new regionality criteria | December 2011 | Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), Operations Support Group | | |
| 1.3. Strengthen coordination and synergies between regional programmes and UNDAFs/country programmes | Ongoing | Regional bureaux, regional service centres (RSCs) and country offices | | |

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database.

**Evaluation recommendation 2. UNDP should establish a cost-effective framework for broader and deeper partnership that will facilitate systematic consultation to ensure UNDP's continued relevance at the regional and interregional levels.**
The broad partnerships to be covered by the framework would include relevant regional organizations, national governments, civil society and the United Nations system, especially the regional commissions. The framework and subsequent consultations would ensure that UNDP is appropriately positioned in the regional space to add development value and able to identify opportunities for further regional and interregional cooperation.

**Management response:** Regional service centres were created in part to provide a more cost-effective UNDP response to regional and country-level needs. Geographical proximity lowers costs when compared to working from Headquarters. It facilitates interaction with regional partners, while also reducing the costs for them to engage with UNDP, and has encouraged deeper participation in regional knowledge networks and communities of practice. Another clear advantage recognized in the evaluation report is same time-zone operation hours. All these factors have contributed to accelerating UNDP responses and the sharing of contextually appropriate options with our regional and country-level partners. This in itself increases cost-effectiveness.

At the same time, in all regions the regional service centres continue to foster and strengthen partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, including through the regional programmes. Those partnerships are important for establishing traction for important normative and mandate-related messages on human development and Millennium Development Goals-related commitments and for backstopping their effective implementation at the country level. They also help us ensure alignment with regional priorities, as well as ownership of regional interventions.

A number of initiatives have been taken to promote interregional cooperation under the auspices of the global programme. For instance, the global programme-funded International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth in Brazil has made considerable investments in expanding a new partnership base, consistent with and further enhancing the regional cooperation work that UNDP seeks to support. New partnerships, policy dialogue across regions, and South-South knowledge exchanges are central to the work of the Policy Centre, which is anchored in UNDP's Poverty Group. As mentioned in the evaluation report, in 2009 a strategic partnership with China was entered into in order to establish trilateral cooperation to support developing countries, particularly in Africa. A new partnership was forged with the Republic of Korea for the establishment of the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre for Global Development Partnerships, which will undertake policy analysis and research on global partnerships in international development. UNDP is confident that these types of initiatives will help us learn how to broaden the South-South partnership base in a cost-effective manner.

Going forward, UNDP regional bureaux will take stock of current and ongoing partnerships in order to identify potential areas for improvement. Based on this stocktaking exercise and existing good practices, regional partnership and resource mobilization strategies will be reinforced

As the chairs of the Regional Directors' Teams (RDTs), acting within the UNDG machinery, UNDP regional directors will continue to promote effective complementarities and a culture of cooperation among the United Nations organizations active in each region. UNDP will also continue to participate actively in the regional coordination mechanism (RCM), as convened by the United Nations Regional Commissions, and encourage a two-way interaction with these bodies in support of each other's work.

Finally, UNDP will strengthen the governing and, where applicable, advisory boards of the regional programmes and projects to ensure the continued relevance of regional and interregional interventions through greater consultation with key partners and stakeholders.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1. Take stock of current regional partnerships and integrate responses into ongoing and new regional cooperation frameworks | Continuous | Regional service centres, regional bureaux | | |
| 2.2. Ensure appropriate planning and exchange of work plans between the RDTs and the RCMs with a view to deepening synergies and complementarities, where applicable | Ongoing | Regional bureaux with RSCs | | |
| 2.3 Strengthen the role of thematic boards/advisory panels to review and assess programme contributions to intended outcomes | December 2011 | Regional bureaux, RSCs | | |

**Evaluation recommendation 3. UNDP should foster a corporate culture that encourages interregional lesson learning and programmatic collaboration and that ensures the use of regionally grounded knowledge across the organization.**

UNDP-defined regions should not become silos with regard to programmes and knowledge sharing. Countries sharing common problems and cross-border issues are not always in the same region and in such cases UNDP needs to facilitate interregional cooperation. Interregional knowledge sharing needs to be promoted through the use of appropriate corporate incentives that would strengthen UNDP global knowledge management efforts. Incentives also need to be developed to promote the use of regional knowledge and experiences in UNDP corporate strategic planning, advocacy work and policy advice.

**Management respo..se:** Regional and interregional collaboration are integral to what UNDP does as a global organization seeking to help countries to accelerate their progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Efforts are under way to strengthen a corporate culture that encourages both vertical and horizontal lessons learning and programmatic collaboration. The former involves the use of country- and regional-level knowledge for corporate learning; the latter involves intraregional and interregional activities.)

A number of actions have already been undertaken to strengthen the practice and knowledge architecture, which is anchored in the regional centres and complemented by the implementation of the organization's knowledge-management strategy. The fourth global cooperation framework set out to: (i) establish a "one-practice team approach" for integration of the global and regional programmes; and (ii) adopt a corporate approach to regionalization to strengthen coherence and effectiveness of the practice architecture. Throughout 2009 and 2010 a cadre of "practice leaders" — policy advisers with practice specific knowledge — was deployed to each regional centre with two objectives: leveraging country and regional experiences in a global context, and bringing policy advisory services closer to our national partners. Knowledge management experts have been deployed to all regional centres, where they are, inter alia, responsible for accelerating intraregional and interregional knowledge codification and sharing.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 3.1 Increase synergies between the regional and global programmes to promote interregional coope ation | December 2011 | Regional bureaux, BDP, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) | | |
| 3.2 Increase collaboration between regional centres, leveraging existing knowledge management systems and management structures; | December 2011 | BDP/BCPR and RSCs | | |

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| review the composition of the global programme advisory committee | | | | |
| 3.3 Establish explicit methods by which regional learning can inform corporate direction and decision-making | By the end of 2011 | BDP, BCPR, Executive Office, regional bureaux, country offices | | |

**Evaluation recommendation 4. To increase effectiveness and develop capacity, UNDP should base the management of regional programmes and projects in an appropriate location in the region or subregion.**

The five regional programmes should be managed by regional service centres, benefiting from regional dynamics and leveraging regional capacity. Regional projects should be located close to the beneficiaries, where they will be able to better respond to changing contexts and better utilize regional capacities. Where possible, this should be with regional institutions, with the host-country resident representative serving as principal project representative. In cases where projects are located within the regional service centre, they should have dedicated project management capacity.

**Management response**: As stated in paragraph 86 of the evaluation report, the regional programmes of Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States are managed by the regional service centres. The regional programmes for Africa, Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean are partly managed from headquarters, reflecting the different states of evolution of regional approaches observed in the evaluation.

UNDP recognizes that each region presents its own challenges and opportunities, and requires an approach informed by lessons from other regions but tailored to the specific needs of the regional context. This is true for both the regional programmes and the regional service centres more generally. The location of regional projects will be determined based on their content and implementation arrangements, with the aim of promoting maximum ownership at the regional and country levels. With regard to the recommendation that projects located with the regional service centres should have dedicated project management capacity, UNDP recognizes that the capacities for project management and advisory services are different though mutually supportive. Policy advisers should share accountability for how their advice is implemented and the results that are achieved, and need to be familiar with the modalities which shape their advisory role and how their advice is implemented. Project experts likewise have an obligation to contribute within their area of expertise to UNDP corporate practice development.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 4.1 Develop, as part of the regionality criteria, specific criteria for determining the location of regional programme and regional project management, taking into account the strategic, substantive, partnership and operational requirements of each case | July 2011 | Regional bureaux | | |

**Evaluation recommendation 5. UNDP should maximize the use of regular resources allocated for regional programmes for interventions that contribute directly to development results and minimize their use for internal corporate results.**

Regular resources should be used for adding direct development value by allocation to regional projects or to policy advice that makes a clear and demonstrable contribution to development results. The use of regular resources to finance support to the project management function of country offices should be minimized. Technical support to country offices to carry out these day-to-day functions should be financed from the management budget, possibly through further decentralization of support capacity from Headquarters to regional service centres and, where appropriate, from regional service centres to country offices.

**Management response**: Regional programming aims to contribute to the achievement of development results at the country, subregional and regional levels. Regional cooperation frameworks, approved by the Executive Board, present a variety of approaches and a mix of assets to address development challenges specific to each region. Policy advisers financed through the regional programmes are assigned to work on either regional or country priorities, or in some cases both. Their main purpose is to be available to regional, subregional and national counterparts as defined and scheduled through regional projects, country programmes and budgeted work plans.

| Key action | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 5.1 Based on structural review findings and business model (recommendation 7), refine functional alignments with funding sources where necessary | Sept 2011 | Regional bureaux, RSCs | | |

**Evaluation recommendation 6. UNDP should retain the system of regional service centres under the purview of the regional bureaux.** While the staffing composition and portfolio of activities and services may vary according to regional context and demands, efforts are required to standardize management tools and approaches, including those related to monitoring the contribution, relevance and efficiency of the regional service centre arrangement. The centres need to strengthen their networking and ensure that they benefit from, and contribute to, global knowledge. The regional service centres should be headed by at least a deputy regional director. The residual practice of having dual reporting lines, including for practice leaders, in regional service centres should cease. All staff should have a single reporting line within the regional service centre, while at the same time be accountable for linking and contributing to global knowledge.

**Management response**: All regional service centres are an integral part of their respective regional bureau. Oversight of the regional service centres is the responsibility of the relevant regional bureau. All these centres are headed by a deputy regional director, who reports to the regional director.

UNDP agrees with the need to standardize management tools and approaches as part of the ongoing evolution of these established centres. In order to facilitate the provision of integrated advisory services, UNDP is developing a common system for tracking incoming requests from country offices. This will include all advisers, irrespective of their location, and all practice areas. The system is based on practices already in place in some regional service centres. This global tracking system will be linked to the organization's overall management systems where contributions, relevance and efficiency can be monitored and compared.

Efforts are also under way to systematize the way UNDP makes available its advisory services. With focal points at the country level, practice leaders and advisers at the regional service centres, and practice directors at the global level, UNDP now has an institutional structure that can facilitate an internally connected "knowledge hierarchy". The location of practice leaders and advisers at the regional level is vital to this architecture. Combined with the peer-to-peer potential of Teamworks, UNDP will be better able to support partner institutions at regional and country levels to achieve development results. The challenge remains, however, to leverage this structure for interregional lesson learning and improved programmatic collaboration that permits reciprocal knowledge exchanges between country, regional and global advisory services. The UNDP Strategy for Knowledge Management promotes a corporate culture of interregional lesson learning and programmatic collaboration (see response to evaluation recommendation 3).

Although the evaluation questions the practice of dual reporting lines for practice leaders in the regional service centres, UNDP believes there is limited evidence to warrant this conclusion. UNDP acknowledges the challenge of this dual track. As key pillars of the UNDP global practice architecture, however, practice leaders need a substantive connection to the Practice Director in New York. It is precisely the clear distinction made between matters related to country offices (within the purview of the regional bureaux) and those related to global practice (within the remit of central

bureaux) that makes the matrix relationship of practice leaders function effectively.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 6.1 Establish across regional centres a common tracking system, which will be monitored globally | June 2011 | BDP, BCPR, Bureau of Management, RSCs | | |
| 6.2 Periodically review matrix reporting arrangements to ensure optimal configuration suitable for evolving practice and knowledge architecture | Annual basis, beginning December 2011 | BDP, BCPR, Office of Human Resources | | |

**Evaluation recommendation 7. UNDP should develop a strategic corporate business model that covers global, regional and country levels; provides a sustainable and transparent allocation of funds and human resources; ensures that functions and services are not duplicated; and facilitates the location of capacity in the most appropriate place.**

UNDP should recognize that in order to strengthen the results from its regional work and presence, it cannot look only at regional programming and institutional arrangements. The business model, therefore, needs to be holistic, treating the programming and institutional structures within the organization as a whole, and at all levels. It should recognize the links between country, regional and global programming and results. It should give priority to establishing critical country-office capacity which should be identified and put in place. In developing the model for supplementary technical support to country offices, UNDP can draw on approaches that have worked including that of the Global Environment Facility, which finances dedicated technical expertise in the region which also contributes to corporate initiatives. The model should enhance cross-practice and cross-regional approaches to human development and United Nations partnerships at the country and regional levels. The UNDP business model must also protect, and expand to the extent possible, the funding for regional programmes so that they can maintain and augment their contribution to development results and step up to emerging challenges.

**Management response**: UNDP recognizes the need to continue to review and fine-tune its strategic corporate business model, as proposed in the evaluation recommendation, while retaining sufficient flexibility to adapt to each regional context. UNDP is continuously striving to improve its strategies and business practices so as to achieve high-level quality development results in the most cost-effective manner. This ambition is at the heart of the Administrator's Action Plan and critical in today's resource-constrained environment.

| Key actions | Time frame | Responsible units | Tracking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Comments | Status |
| 7.1. Develop corporate business model that responds to recommendations of the structural review process relating to regional presence | July 2012 | Corporate | | |
| 7.2 Tighten Atlas data entry to strengthen location-centered monitoring of staff positions and projects between Headquarters, RSCs and sub-locations | Dec 2011 | Corporate | | |

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**Recommendations of the Board of Auditors**

# UNDP: Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2008-2009*

## Report of the Administrator

*Summary*

In July 2010, the United Nations Board of Auditors issued an unqualified or "clean" audit opinion on the financial statements of UNDP for the biennium ended 31 December 2009. While this is the second consecutive biennium that UNDP has been awarded such a positive audit opinion, UNDP management shares the views of its Audit Advisory Committee that positive gains derived from key management initiatives begun in recent years could be easily reversed if these gains are not protected or if underlying systemic issues are not fully addressed over the longer term. UNDP will continue to closely monitor and take appropriate actions to sustain the gains.

The present report provides an implementation status update on the 89 audit recommendations made by the Board of Auditors for the biennium ended 31 December 2009. To date UNDP has implemented all recommendations targeted for completion by third quarter 2010. Pursuant to Executive Board decision DP/2010/9, the status of the audit implementation is available in tabular form on the Executive Board Secretariat website. The present report also reviews progress made at UNDP in addressing the top 11 audit priorities for 2008-2009, and it outlines management plans to address the revised set of top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium. The top 10 list reflects progress and positive gains noted by the Board of Auditors between the issuance of the original top 15 list (for the 2006-2007 biennium) and the issuance of the revised top 11 list. The report takes into consideration guidance provided by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its review of the UNDP financial statements, the UNDP Audit Advisory Committee, and the Report of the Board of Auditors (A/65/5/Add.1). The audit report of the Board of Auditors is also posted on the website of the Executive Board Secretariat.

*The compilation of data required to provide the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present report.

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*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) note the unqualified audit opinions issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors; (b) note progress made by UNDP in addressing the audit-related priorities in 2008-2009; and (c) support UNDP's ongoing management efforts in addressing the revised top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium.

# I. Introduction

1. At the conclusion of its biennium audit of UNDP in July 2010, the United Nations Board of Auditors issued an unqualified or "clean" audit opinion on the financial statements of UNDP for the biennium ended 31 December 2009. This is the second consecutive biennium for which UNDP has been awarded such a positive audit opinion. Nevertheless, UNDP management shares the views of its Audit Advisory Committee that positive gains derived from key management initiatives begun in recent years could be easily reversed if these gains are not protected or if underlying systemic issues are not fully addressed over the longer term.

2. UNDP has reaffirmed its commitment, inter alia, by adopting an accountability-based and risk-informed approach to addressing audit issues, an approach consistent with the principles of accountability outlined in the UNDP accountability framework and oversight policy (DP/2008/16/Rev.1). The Management Group meeting chaired by the Administrator has set the tone by strategically reviewing progress made in addressing underlying audit issues. This effort has been complemented by discussion at the Operations Group meeting chaired by the Associate Administrator, where operational and specific audit issues have been addressed.

3. Pursuant to Executive Board decision DP/2010/9, the status of the audit implementation is available in tabular form on the Executive Board Secretariat website. The present report reviews progress made since the last update (DP/2010/11) in addressing the top 11 audit priorities for UNDP in 2008-2009, and it outlines management plans to address the revised set of top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium. The revised top 10 audit-related management priority list reflects progress made and positive gains noted by the Board of Auditors from both the original top 15 list (for the 2006-2007 biennium) and the top 11 list (for the 2008-2009 biennium).

# II. Status of audit recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the biennium ended 31 December 2009

4. For the biennium ended 31 December 2009, the Board of Auditors issued 89 audit recommendations in its report A/65/5/Add.1. Of these, the Board of Auditors categorized 35 recommendations as main or high priority. The other 54 recommendations were assigned medium priority. UNDP management appreciates that the Board has recognized the key improvements that have been made and has encouraged UNDP to strive for higher standards of organizational excellence in anticipation of the implementation of the International Public

Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in 2012. UNDP management agrees with all 89 recommendations of the Board of Auditors.

5. Consistent with practices adopted in previous bienniums, UNDP has, in consultation with the Board of Auditors, adopted a phased approach to the implementation of the audit recommendations. Target completion dates have been set for different recommendations based on a management assessment of the effort and complexity involved in fully addressing the audit recommendations. The phased approach also minimizes disruption of work at UNDP Headquarters and country offices during peak periods. Progress will be measured and monitored in consultation with the Board and based on the target completion dates.

6. As of 31 October 2010 (the cut-off date for this report), UNDP had implemented all 19 of the recommendations targeted for completion by the third quarter of 2010.

**Table 1: Implementation status by target completion dates**

| Target completion date | Implemented | In progress | Ongoing | Overtaken by events | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010, 3rd quarter | 19 | | | | 19 |
| 2010, 4th quarter | 7 | 16 | | | 23 |
| 2011, 1st quarter | | 1 | | | 1 |
| 2011, 2th quarter | | 5 | | | 5 |
| 2011, 4th quarter | | 17 | | | 17 |
| 2012, 1st quarter | | 6 | | | 6 |
| Overtaken by events | | | | 1 | 1 |
| To be determined | | 11 | 6 | | 17 |
| **Grand Total** | **26** | **56** | **6** | **1** | **89** |
| Percentage | 92 | | | | |

7. At the aggregated level, 92 per cent of the audit recommendations have either been fully implemented or are in the process of being fully implemented. The details of the implementation status, including action plans, are available in the document posted on the website of the Executive Board Secretariat together with this report. One recommendation (which relates to mid-term reviews for staff performance assessment) has been overtaken by events. That is, the new Results Competency Assessment approach does not require mid-term reviews. Recommendations categorized as "ongoing" are those for which the recommended action requires the exercise of continuous due diligence. Therefore, these recommendations are being monitored on an ongoing basis. Examples include continuous follow-up of trust funds with accounting deficits and continuous monitoring of country offices that have been delegated authorities by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office.

**Table 2: Implementation status by priority**

| Recommendations by priority and status | Implemented (a) | In progress (b) | Ongoing (c) | Overtaken by events (d) | Total (a) to (d) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | 12 | 20 | 3 | | 35 |
| Medium | 14 | 36 | 3 | 1 | 54 |
| Low | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 26 | 56 | 6 | 1 | 89 |
| **Percentage of total** | 29 | 63 | 7 | 1 | 100 |
| **Percentage of cumulative total** | 92 | | | | |

# III. Review of progress made in addressing top audit priorities in 2008-2009

8. It is important to remember that the top 11 audit-related management priorities for the 2008-2009 biennium reflected progress made on the original top 15 audit priority list identified by UNDP management during the 2006-2007 biennium. Based on discussions with the Board of Auditors and Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), the top 11 audit priorities list has now been further revised downward with the establishment of a top 10 audit priority list for the 2010-2011 biennium. The details are described in section III below.

9. Consistent with practices started during the last two bienniums, UNDP management has leveraged the independent view of the Board of Auditors and OAI to assess UNDP's progress in addressing the top 11 audit priorities as well as other remaining challenges.

10. The conclusion is that there has been encouraging progress made on all the top 11 audit-related management priorities, though progress on various details within each area has been quite uneven. In four areas, good progress has been noted and the controls in place have been deemed effective. This means significant progress has been achieved and hence there is a lower level of audit risk. In another four areas, some improvements have been noted but more work remains. For three areas, it has been concluded that not all the remedial actions have been fully implemented and hence the effectiveness of these interventions has yet to be fully established. The results of the internal assessment were presented and endorsed by the Operations Group meeting chaired by the Associate Administrator and by the Management Group meeting chaired by the Administrator. See Annex 1 for a summary of the assessment of the top 11 audit-related priorities for the 2008-2009 biennium.

11. Key management initiatives implemented in the past year that contributed to the positive assessment included, but are not limited to, the following:

a) Noted improvement in the timeliness of submission of audit reports for nationally implemented projects (NIM) with the enhancement of the Comprehensive Audit Recommendation Database System (CARDS).

Seventy-seven per cent of the NIM audit reports were submitted on time in 2009 compared with 59 per cent in 2007.

b) The total value of long outstanding advances (more than 6 months) to Governments for NIM projects was reduced from $16 million at the end of 2007 to $13.4 million at the end of 2009.

c) Fifty-two out of 61 country offices that previously requested or were approved for deferment have progressed to the next stage in the implementation process under the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT). Fifty-eight country offices are now UNDP HACT compliant (as compared to 15 in 2009).

d) Corporate guidelines for NIM projects have been promulgated and have been contributing to improved clarity of the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of UNDP and its development partners on the ground.

e) The UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results has been launched and more than 500 project managers have been trained.

f) The Enhanced Results-Based Management platform, launched in early 2010, has provided a more integrated approach to work-planning (including risk management), monitoring and reporting of results.

g) The fast-track procedures have been promulgated and implemented in 16 country offices in 2010, contributing to more effective local office responses to crisis situations.

h) Procurement procedures were streamlined by moving from a multi-level review to a single level procurement review committee for contracts.

i) The more advanced Level II externally accredited procurement certification programme has been launched to supplement the current Level I certification programme.

j) All bank accounts in UNDP offices are now reconciled in a timely manner, and there has been significant improvement as regards the total value of unrecorded deposits (from $18 million in 2007 to $0.6 million in 2009).

k) The internal control framework guidelines have been revised and are now aligned with international standards with clearer linkage to the UNDP accountability framework.

l) Asset registers for all country offices have been duly certified and validated by the Bureau of Management prior to the biennial closing of accounts.

m) The UNDP recruitment and selection framework has been promulgated and the Compliance Review Board (at Headquarters for professional posts) and the Compliance Review Panels (at Headquarters and country offices for General Service posts) have been established to protect the integrity and quality of the selection process.

n) The total value of accounting deficits for the Trust Funds not denominated in euros was reduced to $2.25 million in 2009, as compared to $33.6 million in 2008.

12. As mentioned above, in three areas more work will be required before it can be said that progress has been made in addressing the underlying capacities and management issues. These areas are (a) project/programme management; (b) procurement management; and (c) long outstanding audit recommendations.

a) Strengthening programme and project management. Over the past years important strides were made in strengthening results-based approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation in the context of programme and project management. Clearly, however, more work is needed as regards national

ownership and engagement. In addition to the publication of the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results in 2009, emphasis has been placed both on conducting training workshops to improve the evaluability of UNDP programmes and project results frameworks, and on bolstering the links between outcomes and national priorities. UNDP expects to see improvements over the medium term.

b) Enhancing procurement management at country offices. This requires both a fresh look at staff capacity-building over a longer term and effective policy reviews. The Operations Group has approved a Procurement Roadmap for 2010-2011. It is expected to strengthen UNDP's procurement function. UNDP country offices are at the forefront of procurement activities and their capacities need to be strengthened. It is recognized that there are specific risks and opportunities associated with country offices in special development situations which require Headquarters support for complex procurement activities. Inter-agency collaboration will also be promoted, and work is progressing on the harmonization of procurement policies and practices, including vendor management.

c) Long outstanding audit recommendations. In its 2009 Report to the Executive Board, OAI indicated that more than 99 per cent of all the audit recommendations issued by OAI in the past five years have been implemented within an 18-month period. UNDP is working towards closing out long-outstanding audit recommendations by 31 December 2010.

## IV. Management plans for addressing the top 10 audit priorities in the 2010-2011 biennium

13. Based on the results of the joint assessment with the Board of Auditors and OAI, a revised list, the top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium, has been established and endorsed both by the Operations Group meeting chaired by the Associate Administrator and by the Management Group meeting chaired by the Administrator.

14. Three key areas of the previous top 11 list — bank reconciliations, the local office staff recruitment process, and common services management — have been dropped, as the controls put in place have been deemed effective and the new procedures have been integrated into the existing ones. These areas will continue to be monitored closely, however, to ensure against regression and the reappearance of significant audit risks. A fourth area (Trust Fund management) has been modified to reflect improvements made and so that residual issues can be further addressed.

15. While several of the focus areas in the revised top 10 list remain similar to those of the previous top 11 list, the contexts of several functional areas have been fine-tuned or revised to reflect the identification of emerging risks. The revised top 10 audit-related priority list now includes three new focus areas (high risk programme portfolios, balance sheet data clean up in Atlas, and leave records management) to reflect the concerns raised by OAI, the Board and the Audit Advisory Committee. See Annex 2 for an overview of the top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium.

16. The top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011biennium are described below with discussion on how UNDP management intends to address the audit risks and underlying systemic issues. UNDP is mindful of the fiscal challenge associated with the lingering impact of the ongoing financial crisis and also of the need to achieve cost savings, efficiencies and effectiveness as it prepares itself for the transition to International Public Sector Accounting Standards (by 2012. This revised list of the top 10 audit-related management priorities reflects the commitment of UNDP management to focusing on key audit risks while building up internal capacities.

(a) NIM audit follow-up and HACT monitoring/support. Regional bureaux have been encouraged to work with their country offices and their respective national counterparts to explore long-term contractual arrangements with local or subregional auditing firms for the audit of NIM projects where appropriate. This will avoid long delays in current procurement cycles — delays occasioned by a need to select suitable auditing firms to conduct the NIM audits — and will ensure greater consistency in the NIM auditing process. UNDP will also explore different cash transfer options to balance fiduciary risks and national capacity-building objectives at the programme country level. In addition, as part of its audit workplan for 2011, OAI will review HACT implementation in selected countries so as to identify issues, challenges and areas where improvement is required in implementing HACT.

(b) Programme project design, monitoring and evaluation. Regional bureaux are currently working on implementing measures to improve support to country offices in preparing their United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and country programme documents (CPD). These efforts, together with continuing efforts to strengthen results-based management capacity, as well as accountability and quality assurance, will affect new and existing country programme documents and the integrated work plan. The combined effect of these measures will be a gradual improvement in the quality of UNDAF/CPD/integrated work plan results and indicators over the next two to three years. Because programmes and projects are nationally owned, and indicators of achievement are discussed and agreed with national partners, improvement in results-based management can only be achieved incrementally as new or revised programmes and projects are discussed with partners. UNDP is on target to present a first set of country programme documents with improved results frameworks to the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2001. This is in keeping with the target completion date of second quarter 2011.

(c) Procurement management at UNDP offices. With the UNDP Procurement Roadmap currently being implemented, UNDP is building upon earlier improvements in its procurement processes. For example, the newly launched, externally accredited Level II procurement certification programme will contribute to the professionalization of the procurement staff. Other initiatives include: fast-track procurement policies and procedures to enable UNDP offices to be more responsive to the special needs of country offices in crisis and special development situations; the introduction of a streamlined procurement review process to promote greater efficiency; and exploring how to integrate procurement planning with the current, integrated work-planning process in UNDP offices.

(d) Atlas user security and internal controls. The current UNDP Internal Control Framework has been revised. It is now aligned with international

standards. As part of the transition to IPSAS, UNDP will be strengthening the segregation of duties in Atlas and is currently implementing further measures to better monitor high-risk transactions in Atlas.

(e) Asset management. With the transition to IPSAS, specific attention will be given to the training of asset focal points in UNDP offices to assure accurate accounting in Atlas of all non-expendable assets. Further, UNDP has extended its semiannual asset-certification exercise (previously implemented for country offices) to all Headquarters units.

(f) IPSAS readiness. UNDP expects to be on track to adopt IPSAS in 2012, pursuant to Executive Board decision 2009/15. Major efforts are currently under way to accelerate efforts to ensure the readiness of staff, the organization, stakeholders, data, the Atlas system, and IPSAS-related policy. A key milestone was reached recently when the Operations Group chaired by the Associate Administrator endorsed the decision to establish a Global Shared Service Center to support IPSAS-related functions. UNDP will continue to seek the guidance of the Board of Auditors as well as of the Audit Advisory Committee while working closely with the United Nations and with the Atlas partner agencies in exploring opportunities for synergies and policy harmonization so as to minimize software changes to our system.

(g) Leave records and recruitment management. This is a new focus area which was emphasized by the Board of Auditors in its 2008-2009 biennium audit in view of the planned implementation of IPSAS. In response, UNDP has started developing within Atlas controls that address leave administration and the training of staff. This should ensure the accurate and timely updating of leave records. As part of its 2011 audit workplan — as part of auditing human resource management at UNDP country offices — OAI will audit leave-records management. In addition, UNDP will continue to emphasize the importance of effective compliance review bodies at UNDP offices in order to ensure that recruitment policies and procedures are appropriate.

(h) Balance sheet data clean up in Atlas. This is another new focus area developed in response to an audit recommendation of the Board. While the Board has noted the significant efforts that were made in 2008-2009 to clean up long outstanding account balances in Atlas, in the current biennium UNDP is stepping up its efforts to deal with such long outstanding account balances.

(i) Management of high-risk programme portfolios. This is a third new focus area which reflects the increased attention management has been paying to potentially high-risk programme portfolios. These include The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), as well as euro-denominated trust funds. UNDP will be issuing specific guidelines to help county offices mitigate losses on euro-denominated trust funds.

(j) Long outstanding audit recommendations. Pursuant to Executive Board decision 2006/19, UNDP management has been taking active steps to fully address all audit recommendations that could be outstanding for 18 months or more as of December 2010. In discussion with OAI, management is differentiating between audit recommendations that are within the control of the UNDP offices and those that are dependent on the reciprocal actions of other parties.

# V. Conclusion

17. UNDP must ensure that the positive gains stemming from key management initiatives of past years are not reversed in the medium to longer term. The revised top 10 audit-related management priorities for the 2010-2011 biennium set the tone at the corporate level and communicate the management response to existing and emerging risks. In addition, audit risks that may affect the ability of the organization to carry out its mandate and strategic plan are being brought to the attention of the Enterprise Risk Management Committee, which is chaired by the Associate Administrator. Thus corporate risks arising from audits are closely monitored and mitigated. Consistent with the current practice of UNDP, there will be ongoing and regular oversight monitoring so as to mitigate significant audit or corporate risks.

## Annex 1. Summary assessment of the top 11 management priorities for the 2008-2009 biennium

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NIM audit follow up and outstanding advances | Programme/project design Monitoring and evaluation | Procurement management at country offices |
| Atlas user security and internal control | External tables in bank reconciliation | Asset management |
| Trust Funds management | Integrity of staff recruitment process | Common services |
| IPSAS readiness | | Long outstanding audit recommendations |

| Legend used | | |
|---|---|---|
| Conditions effectively addressed<br>No longer an audit concern | Improvements noted<br>More work remains | Conditions worsened |
| Good improvements noted<br>Controls are effective | Not all remedial actions have been fully implemented, or effectiveness of interventions yet to be fully established | |

## Annex 2. Top 10 audit-related management priorities for 2010-2011

NIM audit follow up and HACT monitoring/support
Programme/project design, monitoring and evaluation
Procurement management at UNDP offices
Atlas user security and internal control
Leave records and recruitment management
Asset management
Management of high-risk programme portfolios
Balance sheet data clean-up (Atlas and pre-Atlas balances)
IPSAS implementation readiness
Long outstanding audit recommendations
Denotes new focus areas
Denotes areas carried forward from earlier top 11 list